



Memo

Date: May 18, 2012

To: Department of Corrections employees
From: Director Mike Ferriter

Re: Lewistown Infirmary project

For more than a decade, the Department of Corrections has faced a growing challenge of how to deal with a growing population of incarcerated offenders with serious, chronic medical problems. These are low-security infirm offenders who present a real challenge when it comes to providing health care in the traditional prison environment. About half are in wheelchairs, many are confined to a bed, need help walking or require constant attention to prevent falls. Many also are sight- or hearing-impaired and have multiple, chronic medical issues such as dementia, heart disease, diabetes, pulmonary disease and cancer.

The 2011 Legislature recognized the need to for a facility designed, staffed and dedicated to serving this population.

In a collaborative effort with the Department of Public Health and Human Services, a wing adjoining the Montana Mental Health Nursing Care Center in Lewistown will be used to house 25 of these offenders with serious physical infirmities. Improvements in the wing will be made to provide the necessary safety and security enhancements. The facility, which will be a state-licensed infirmary, will have a staff of about 34. The medical staff will be employees of DPHHS, which operates the care center. The program manager and safety staff will be Department of Corrections employees.

Improvements are expected to be complete in late November or early December and the program will begin operating about mid-December. The infirmary and care center will have separate staffs and no access between the two facilities will be possible.

The directors of the two agencies are in Lewistown on Friday, May 18, outlining the project to local officials and civic leaders.